Academic Programs Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)
For
Undergraduate Study Program (USP),
Part-time Graduate Study Program (PTGSP),
and the Study Fellowship Program (SFP)

APPLICATION

Q: What are the requirements for getting into an Academic Program?

A: Refer to the Academic Program Website that outlines the Selection Criteria for each program. This information can be found at:
http://ohcm.gsfc.nasa.gov/DevGuide/DevPrograms/Academic.htm

Q: How do I apply to the Academic Program?

A: Submit an online application located at
http://ohcm.gsfc.nasa.gov/DevGuide/DevPrograms/Academic.htm

Q: Is management endorsement required?

A: Management endorsement is not required when you submit your application. The Office of Human Capital Management (OHCM) will contact supervisors for management endorsement once all applications have been submitted.

Q: If I have not been accepted by a university can I still apply to the Program?

A: Applicants must be accepted into an accredited college or university by September 24, 2008.

Q: Are interviews required?

A: Interviews are not required for USP and PTGSP applicants. A panel interview is only required for SFP applicants.

Q: Is an Individual Development Plan (IDP) required to participate in the Academic Program?

A: Yes, all participants accepted into the Program must complete an IDP in SATERN (https://satern.nasa.gov) by December 31, 2008 before taking classes.

Q: What is the approval process for the Program?

A: Applications are initially screened by OHCM to ensure applicants meet minimum criterion. Applications are then forwarded to the appropriate Directorate to prioritize and obtain management endorsement. A Center-level panel will then review and make final approvals.

Q: When can I begin taking classes?

A: Once accepted into the Academic Program, you must attend orientation and then you may register for your spring classes. Academic Programs are run on a calendar year not fiscal year.

Q: Where can I get assistance with preparing my application?

>   A: The Academic Program is offering seven sessions on "Strategies for a Succussful Academic Program Application." More information can be found at http://ohcm.gsfc.nasa.gov/DevGuide/DevPrograms/Academic.htm.

REGISTRATION

Q: Once accepted into an Academic Program and I attend orientation, how do I register for classes?

>   A: Submit <u>one</u> NF-1735 Form through the SATERN (https://satern.nasa.gov) for each academic course you have been approved to take. The SATERN system will route your request(s) electronically to your Supervisor and Directorate Training Coordinator and then to the Talent Cultivation Office (Code 114) for processing. Please submit your External Training Request (NF-1735 Form) at least 30 days prior to the start of your class. **Courses must be approved prior to attending class.** Provide a copy of your approved NF-1735 Form to your University when registering for courses. Take responsibility to monitor the progress of your paperwork in SATERN.

Q: I submitted a NF-1735 Request for Training for a course which is required by my school but your office did not approve it. Why?

>   A: The decision to approve or disapprove a request for training is done on a case-by-case basis. All courses must be related to current job duties or NASA's mission. Sample acceptable justifications will be provided at the Academic Program Orientation session. (Please justify in Block 11 in SATERN on the NF-1735 Form <u>how</u> the course is related).

FEES

Q: What university fees are allowable under the Academic Programs?

>   A: Tuition, required books, required software, library fees, registration fees, and laboratory fees are allowable.

Q: What happens if my classes and fees and books total more than $10,000 for the year?

>   A: The employee is responsible for paying the university any amounts that exceed the program cap or amount approved.

BOOKS

Q: Are books included in my tuition?

>   A: Typically, books are not included in the actual tuition cost. The estimated cost for books should be included in your application and also entered in the "Books or Materials" Section, Block 18b on the NF-1735 Form.

Q: How do I receive reimbursement for books?

>   A: After receiving the approved NF-1735 Form, participants should purchase their textbooks and apply for reimbursement, using the form SF-1164: Claim for Reimbursement for Expenditures on Official Business. Mail or hand carry your completed SF-1164 Form, along with a copy of your receipt(s) and your NF-1735 Form to Code 114, Bldg. 1, Room E100H. Upon review of the request for reimbursement, the

Program Manager will then approve as applicable. It is then submitted to the Accounting Office for reimbursement via direct deposit to the participant's banking institution. Please retain a copy of your reimbursements.

Q: Does it matter when I submit my book reimbursement?
A: Yes, you must submit your book reimbursement prior to the end of the semester.

TIME

Q: How do I charge my approved time off?
A: You should charge your time off to your normal work charge number.
Note: There is no separate charge number for USP or PTGSP.

Q: Can you advise my supervisor that I should be given time off?
A: The OHCM only provides guidelines regarding how much time off a supervisor may approve per week for Program participants. It is your responsibility to request time off from your supervisor prior to starting or continuing in the Program. Time off is not an entitlement and is contingent upon supervisory approval.

Q: Can I receive time off to study or just for attending classes?
A: With supervisory approval, you may be authorized for up to 8 hours per week from scheduled work, with pay, to attend and/or prepare for classes.

WHEN TO NOTIFY THE PROGRAM MANAGER

Q: How do I drop a class?
A: If you drop a class, you must notify the Program Manager in writing of the change, the reason for the change and indicate whether costs were incurred due to the change.

Q: What if I planned to take courses but now I need to take a semester off?
A: Contact the Program Manager to discuss your anticipated change, and the reason for the change, prior to making the change.

Q: What happens if I don't get a passing grade, get an incomplete, or I withdraw and the Government still incurs cost?
A: You are responsible for reimbursing GSFC for any cost incurred related to the class such as tuition, fees, and book costs.

Q: What if I want to change schools?
A: Contact the Program Manager to discuss your plans to change schools prior to transferring.

Q: What if I want to take more classes than I indicated on my application and cost estimate?
A: Any changes to your original course requests must be approved in advance by the Program Manager. Please contact the Program Manager to discuss your requests.

Q: I received an invoice from my university for non-payment. What do I do about getting it paid?

   A: Universities will sometimes send the invoice directly to you. Just forward the original invoice to National Shared Service Center (NSSC). For payment status, contact the NSSC at 1-877-NSS-C123.

GENERAL QUESTIONS

Q: What are the benefits of being in the Academic Program?

   A: Up to $10k per person/per calendar year to pay for tuition, books, and course-related fees; up to 8 hours time-off per week with supervisory approval; university discounts for tuition, books, and application fees; and an opportunity to use work-related projects in academic studies.

Q: I'm doing dissertation study and I don't think they give me a grade. What happens then?

   A: Dissertation classes are usually given a Pass or Fail grade for each semester completed. If you are enrolled in a dissertation class, you must submit your grades. If your school does not provide grades, the school must provide a letter stating that you are in good standing.

Q: If I am not accepted into the Academic Program is there another way for GSFC to fund my classes?

   A: Yes, your Directorate may fund classes using Directorate training funds.

Q: Who can I talk about my academic and career goals?

   A: Goddard has onsite Career Coaches/Counselors, Lynda Jones and Mary Wiggins. They are available for guidance regarding your academic and career goals. They are located in Bldg. 1, Room L100. For an appointment call x6-5794. You can also discuss your academic goals with the Program Manager.

Q: Does the Academic Program pay for academic degrees?

   A: The Academic Program is designed to enhance your knowledge, skills and abilities. All courses are approved on a case-by-case basis. Courses requested must be mission-related and designed to improve your job performance, or it must demonstrably provide learning beneficial to the organization. Requests should be justified on the basis of how the course will improve your job performance in your current position, or a function closely related to a projected position, or how it contributes to learning beneficial to the organization. Stating that a course is a required as a part of a degree requirement is not acceptable justification.

Q: How do I substitute a class that has already been approved?

   A: You must contact the Academic Program Manager and then submit a new NF-1735 Form and in the "comments block, write, "This course substitutes, _____ and send through appropriate approval.

CONTACTS

Q: Who do I contact to check on the status of my training requests?
> A: Contact the Academic Programs Coordinator at x6-5393 prior to Training Office approval, or NSSC at 1-877-NSS-C123 after Training Office approval.

Q: Who do I contact with general Program questions?
> A: Renee McElrath at x6-5393.

Q: Who do I send my grades to once I complete a class?
> A: Submit an official grade report or transcript (web version acceptable) to the NSSC at fax number:1-866-779-6772 at the end of each semester. Visit the NSSC web site at www.nssc.nasa.gov to print out Form 27, which is a fax cover sheet.
> **NOTE**: Failure to submit grade reports or transcripts at the end of each semester will result in **you** reimbursing the Center for the costs of your training.

GENERAL CONTACT INFORMATION

Michelle Dubose-Williams – Academic Programs Manager, x6-5166
Renee McElrath – Academic Programs Coordinator, x6-5393